

NEWS



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CITY ASKS COURT TO PROTECT CITY SERVICES AFTER UNION STRIKE VOTE

SEA Walkout Would Disrupt Key City Services

Union Rejects City Offer to Return to Negotiations and Preserve Essential Services During Strike

SUNNYVALE, Calif. – Sunnyvale City Council directed the filing of an injunction to prevent the disruption of essential City services after members of the Sunnyvale Employees Association (SEA) ignored the City's plea to return to the bargaining table and instead voted to approve a work stoppage.

The strike authorization vote on Tuesday, April 25 by SEA members came after union leadership rejected the City's last, best and final offer, which includes a 10 percent wage hike during the next 15 months, the continuation of a 30 percent employee pension contribution and maintaining full health benefits. Even without this offer, SEA members already average more than \$100,000 in wages and benefits, placing them at or above average when compared to similar workers in neighboring communities.

"It's regretful that SEA has put the City in the position of having to go to court to make certain that essential employees don't walk off the job and put public health and safety in jeopardy. After several attempts to negotiate with SEA about essential employees during strike, we have been left with no choice but to take this action in the public's interest," said Sunnyvale Mayor Glenn Hendricks. "The City has a fair and reasonable offer on the table that balances fiscal responsibility and competitive wages, in the face of just absorbing \$300 million in new CalPERS costs."

SEA's request for a 17 percent wage hike – including 4 percent retroactively – would cost a minimum of \$82 million more than the City's offer (total package) – the equivalent of 11 public safety positions or 38 percent of the City's library budget. This is on top of a \$300 million hit to the City's budget to pay for reforms to the CalPERS pension system. The combined effect of these increased costs would severely impact City services and result in employee layoffs. Like many other California cities, Sunnyvale is expecting additional CalPERS reforms with steep costs to city budgets.

SEA represents a broad range of employees, including a number who play key roles in maintaining public health and safety. To ensure health and safety, the City is asking the court to require essential positions to remain on the job in the increasingly likely event of a strike. Among the jobs the City has asked the court to protect are water pollution control plant operators; environmental chemists responsible for maintaining water quality; water and sewer plant crew leaders; landfill technicians; public safety records specialists; and fire department fleet mechanics.

SEA left the bargaining table in June 2016, rejecting the City's last, best and final offer and declaring an impasse. SEA represents about 450 of the City's more than 900 employees, many of whom are represented by bargaining units that have already accepted contract offers very similar to the one SEA has rejected. The City sent a letter to SEA leadership last week asking for a return to the bargaining table to discuss a one-time signing bonus on top of the City's fair wage offer. SEA has not responded to the City's request to negotiate and rejected the request to negotiate about essential employees during strike.

"We value and respect our employees, but a strike will not accomplish anything except infringe on the health and safety of our residents. It's time to get back to the bargaining table again." said Mayor Hendricks.

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